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GANTT, CHARLES RICHARD. Synthetic Landscapes. (1976)  
Directed by: Professor Walter W. Barker. Pp. 3.

This thesis consists of seven landscape paintings which were exhibited in the Weatherspoon Art Gallery from April 18 through May 9, 1976. A 35mm. transparency of each work is on file in the Walter C. Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPES

by

Charles Richard Gantt

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro  
1976

April 7 1976

Approved by

Warrin Barker  
Thesis Adviser

This thesis has been approved by the following  
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the  
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Arthur W. Dixon

April 7 1976

Date of Acceptance by Committee

# CATALOGUE OF TRANSPARENCIES

TITLE	SIZE
1. 12 Springdale Court	24" X 24"
2. 12 Springdale Court (detail)	
3. 12 Springdale Court (detail)	
4. Gnomes	48" X 45"
5. Landscape	48" X 36"
6. Landscape (detail)	
7. Night Factory	60" X 48"
8. Landscape with Grass and Trees	80" X 26½"
9. Landscape with Grass and Trees (detail)	
10. Winnie's Rainbow	78" X 48"
11. Winnie's Rainbow (detail)	
12. Local Hot Spot	78" X 48"
13. Local Hot Spot (detail)	
14. Local Hot Spot (detail)	

All paintings are acrylics on canvas.

My thesis work is in landscape painting. During the past two years, (1974-1976) my interests have become specialized within the general area of landscape. This specialization is manifest in the emergence of a subject which has become predominant. By subject I mean instances or occurrences within the United States' constructed urban and rural landscape, rather than a specific object.

The architecture, both commercial and domestic, fostered to meet the demands of the Industrial Revolution yielded the first large-scale instances of synthesis within man's environment. Rapidly constructed functional buildings forced their rigid geometry upon the landscape. The natural organic components: trees, grasses, shrubs, rivers, and changes in elevation were re-ordered to function within the mechanical grid. Economy of form became the rule; landscape became a contained construction.

The United States exhibits the consequences of this nineteenth century view of progress. The synthetic landscape is so pervasive that it has altered the public's concept of the natural environment. Highways run in logical linear patterns, houses and commercial buildings are aligned with the roads, lawns repeat the surface and level of roads and parking lots, and other plantings are parallel or perpendicular to the buildings and road. Enormous areas of land

conform to meet the needs of commercial agriculture, and become architecture in their geometric totality. The geometric orientation of objects is now subconsciously perpetuated like a well learned rule.

I find these synthesized occurrences fascinating expressions of order, harmony and precision. These syntheses are the subject of my paintings.

The paintings are culminations of small location-studies. A series of drawings is followed by a color study, and the final painting is done in the studio. The painting must reflect a conscious awareness of being a composition derived from a pre-existing composition, a primary form about primary forms. An object is often pushed close to the surface of the picture plane in contrast to a sudden jump into deep space in another area of the painting. The major object of the composition will often relate perfectly to the dimension of an edge of the canvas and progress from that surface position into deeper spatial illusion.

I have selected subjects which exhibit as little texture and surface detail as possible. I reduce texture and detail further in the painting. This tends to flatten the objects into areas of pattern relationships which are inherent in their original state.

Texture is also minimized on the painted surface. The appearance of the painting should be as synthetic as the

nature of its subject. I choose acrylic paints because of their flattening properties. The canvas is prepared with a gesso ground, six coats and six sandings for smoothness. The paints are brushed on as thinly and smoothly as possible. Paint is then sprayed on to conceal any existing brush strokes which reflect human effort. Separate colors are sprayed on an area so that optical color mixing yields the resulting hue. Areas are masked off with tape and polyethylene to produce a crisp form.

Repetition of shapes often occurs. The repetitions are frequently aspects of the mechanized environment. Light and shadow also produce repeated shapes. Shape repetition contributes to the paintings' unity.

Scale varies in each painting. There are two primary considerations which guide my selection of an appropriate scale for a work. The scale must allow a balance between the self-consciousness of the geometric composition and the illusory resemblance to the natural objects. Also, the granulation which is produced by spraying the paint must have enough area to function as an aid to representation as well as spots of pure color on a color field.

Individual natural objects are simplified to maximize their sense of structure as areas. The reduction brings them into unity with the man-made objects. Humanity is represented in man's spatial arrangement of his structures.